

ANARCHIST

A Belfast Anarchist Bi-Monthly

Aug./Sep. 86 No. 5

Six Counties 20p
Elsewhere 25p



Spanish Revolution –
the Forgotten Women

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AINRIAIL

As you may have noticed, we took off the month of July for our holidays—in the same 'spirit' as the Orange Order, Republican News, etc.. But that month turned out to be no holiday for anti-unionists in the 6 counties. Death and intimidation was how the 'Glorious Twelfth' was celebrated (see article 'Carnival of Reaction'). We return to our bi-monthly regularity, and welcome articles, constructive criticism, photos, etc. If you are interested in our work, you are also welcome to attend our meetings. Just write to the address below.

Our first public meeting, on the Spanish Revolution, was held in June and turned out to be successful. We are planning another in the near future.

SUBS.

Because of the increase of costs, the paper is now 25p & 20p (p.&p.) each issue for subs. A six month sub. is £ 2.50. Send to

Ainriail,
c/o Just Books
1 Winetavern St.
Belfast 1.

Journal Received

Race Today describes itself as 'Britain's leading Black Publication', and the latest issue contains articles on South Africa's working class struggles, as well as Black councillors, plus poetry, reviews etc.

Video Available

'Songs of a Free People' records the visit to Belfast in Easter '85 by the Nicaraguan Folk group 'Heroes and Martyrs'. Songs, interviews, visits, and street theatre.

(£1 a day from Just Books, or £15 to buy from Cara Video, c/o 9, Winetavern St., Belfast 1).

Out For Ourselves

Just published is 'Out For Ourselves' by the Dublin Lesbian and Gay Collectives. It contains articles from the north, as well as the 26 counties, and should be read by every one to help us understand more the importance of sexual politics. A full review will appear in the next issue of Ainriail.

Hit Parade

Because of the lack of space we have also been unable to review Hit Parade's new record 'Nick Knack, Paddy Whack'! It is the Belfast band's first L.P., and follows two singles and the soundtrack for 'Under the Health Surface' (see back page). To be reviewed in the next issue.

Organise!

We welcome issue no. 1 of 'Organise' from the Ballymena Anarchist Group. This news sheet has an excellent (and courageous!) article on the Anglo-Irish Accord and the ideology of Loyatism. Available from—

Organise, c/o Just Books
7 Winetavern St., Belfast 1.

Back To The Point

Carnsore Point, that annual centre for anti-nuclear activity, has re-established itself on the calendar. On Sat. Aug. 16th there will be a day long festival of music, workshops, theatre, etc.

Carnsore Point, the once-planned site for a nuclear-power station in the 26 cos. has a good reputation for its mix of political discussion and entertainment, and if other years are anything to go by, should not be missed.

STRIKE AGAINST CUTBACKS AT RVH.

From May 13th until July 3rd, 24 drivers at the Royal Victoria Hospital were out on strike, supported by work stoppages of other groups of the ancillary workers. The reason was that the management wanted to impose cutbacks without negotiations with representatives of the staff. Before the Eastern Health Board decided that £ 5 million had to be saved on health services. The RVH was to contribute £ 1.4 million and there the supportive services were expected to bear £ 800,000. For these workers it meant a cut in overtime-work, although the same amount of work had to be done. With a basic salary of £ 80 a week, the overtime earnings were

essential to get a decent weeks wage. Already hundreds of women on the site can't pay a National Insurance stamp because they don't earn enough money. The cuts would increase the number drastically. The NUPE is also worried about redundancies. The RVH is the biggest employer in West-Belfast, an area with an average unemployment of around 60 %. The management tried several methods to undermine the strength and moral of the strikers and their supporters. Beginning with the incredible story, that wages could not be paid because the strikers wouldn't let the wages-van passing the picket line. Then the management payed privat con-

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CARNIVAL OF REACTION

July saw the worst sectarian attacks by loyalists in anti-unionist areas in the north since the mid 70's, with assassinations, intimidation, attacks on homes, shops, schools, and churches, and triumphalist marches through estates. Belfast took the brunt, but other areas from Kilkeel to Dunloy, were also affected. As we go to print, at the beginning of August, the attacks continue sporadically. There have also been some sectarian attacks by the Catholic Reactionary Force.

ANGLO-IRISH ACCORD

Loyalist opposition to the Anglo-Irish Accord has been building up since its creation last Nov. Following mass rallies throughout the 6 counties, a one day strike in Feb. ended in violence against the RUC and the renewed campaign of attacks against anti-unionists.

Because of the relative failure of the strike, and the lack of effectiveness of the loyalist boycott of Westminster, Assembly and the local councils, tensions were growing within the loyalist political pact of DUP and OUP, and within the loyalist communities. If the 'leaders' couldn't deliver, then the likelihood increased of activity being taken up more by the paramilitaries and groups such as the Ulster Clubs, and local Orange Lodges.

The Orange marching season around July was predicted as testing ground for both the populist DUP, and the paramilitary UVF and UDA. From 'Burn-the-the-Catholics' Seawright who warned that 'Catholics wouldn't be allowed to take over Manor St.', to Paisley's declaration of civil war, we had demagogues vying for leadership.

SHOOTINGS

The most serious expression of loyalist sectarianism during July was the shooting

dead of 3 young men, and the attempted assassination of three other people.

Brian Leonard, a 20-year old from Co. Tyrone, was shot dead as he left work at a Housing Executive building site on the Shankill Rd., on July 10th. It was two days before the major Orange annual 'celebrations'. The Protestant Action Force, a front for the UVF claimed responsibility.

The next day, a 25-year old taxi driver escaped injury after he was shot at as he drove towards Ardoyne in north Belfast, which was to be the area most affected by attacks during the month. This shooting was claimed by the Ulster Freedom Fighters a front for the UDA.

During the weekend of July 12th, during attacks on residents of Manor St., a shotgun gun was fired twice at a group of women.

In the early morning of July 14th, 25-year old Colm McCallan was dragged from his doorstep in the Ligoniel area, and shot dead by the PAF. He was active in Militant and had campaigned against sectarianism within the trade union movement.

On July 19th, 28-year old Martin Duffy was waiting in a taxi depot in north Belfast for the next call. When he arrived at the house he was shot dead by members of the PAF.

Four days later loyalists struck again. A group of vigilantes was set up in Ligoniel to help defend the area from such attacks. 20-year old Alan McGoldrick was on his own and checking out some fencing, when he was hit by machine-gun fire in the face and foot. He was lucky to escape alive, but the use of such a weapon suggests that the intended target was a group of people.

MARCHES

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frontation or intimidation because they were allowed through or near anti-unionist areas, it was in Portadown that most controversy was generated.

After 'assurances' from southern politicians that no such marches would be allowed, due to their influence through the Anglo-Irish Accord, the RUC banned a march planned for the Tunnel area, but rerouted it through the anti-unionist Garvaghy Rd. estate (a compromise!). The nights before and after the 12th saw attacks on the area from loyalist groups.

ATTACKS

The list of attacks on homes, schools, shops, etc. is too long for this publication to deal with, but one example will illustrate the violently sectarian nature of loyalist attitudes towards anti-unionists.

Rasharkin is a small village in Co. Antrim not far from Ballymena. In this predominantly loyalist village, a small anti-unionist estate, Bamford Park, came under attack on Sunday the 13th July in the early hours of the morning.

Between 40 - 60 people, armed with bars, hammers, and sticks, descended on the estate. Almost every window, door, and car was damaged, including the homes of two Protestant families. On several occasions, they broke into houses and smashed TV's and furniture. In one case a 15-year old boy was badly beaten up.

The systematic nature, and scale of the attack led people to suspect that it was planned from nearby Ballymena.

CATHOLIC REACTIONARIES

The Catholic Reaction Force have made their small contribution to the 'carnival of reaction'. A 2lb. bomb was defused in a Protestant owned pub in Newry, and a building worker was abducted in Derry. He was later released because of pressure

from local groups, including the IRA, according to a statement from Martin McGuinness.

It was James Connolly who warned of a 'carnival of reaction' in the north, if partition of the country was to be imposed. Sectarian attacks, reinforcing institutional discrimination, accompanied the formation of this statelet, and remains an essential characteristic of its continued existence. ■

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tractors to carry out the dirty laundry and get it washed elsewhere. Eventually the laundry staff was laid off, although the striking drivers announced that they would move the dirty linen if the laundry workers were called back to work. The climax was the calling in of 'security forces' to protect the scabs, some of them were

medical staff, who tried to remove the laundry. 17 police and military Landrovers were brought to the site and the picketers joined by a hundred women workers were threatened by machine guns..

On the other hand the strikers enjoyed massive support for their case. Money was raised among the ancillary workers in the RVH, the Musgrave, and the City Hospital. Nurses brought out leaflets dismissing allegations made by management, that as a cause of the strike, patients health was in danger. Local community groups raised money and joined the picket line.

The strike seemed to be over when an agreement was negotiated at the Labor Relations Agency, which would have brought reinstatement of the drivers on their terms. The two sides agreed to discuss whether savings could be found in some other areas of the supportive service budget. But this agreement was blocked by Sam Hazlett, the unit manager. 5 days later a peace formula, pending a Committee of Inquiry into the dispute, was agreed between the NUPE and the management. This was only possible, because wives and children of the strikers occupied administration offices in protest at the managements refusal to the agreement. The women saw the need to talk to the management about the implications the strike had on their lives. The management who always stressed during the strike that they were concerned about the wellbeing of the patients, didn't want to face the problems they caused and locked themselves up in one of the office rooms and only came out when the women withdrew. ■



MUJERES LIBRES

Spanish Revolution – the Forgotten Women



With the 50th anniversary of the Spanish Revolution and Civil War falling this year there is much talk and analysis of what happened. Often, at least in Ireland, anarchists get little or no mention. And as for anarchist women they have been almost totally forgotten Almost.

Mujeres Libres

Mujeres Libres ('free women') was the name of the anarchist women's organisation in Spain during the 1930s. It was founded by women who were activists in the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist trade union movement. By 1939 they had built an autonomous organisation of over 27,000 women; the overwhelming majority of these were working class and peasant women. During this period there were 147 groups throughout Spain.

Aims of Mujeres Libres

Through their own and others experiences in the anarcho-syndicalist movement (CNT – FAI) they had come to believe that an autonomous women's movement was necessary to address what they called 'women's triple enslavement to ignorance, to capital and to men'.

Within anarchist theoretical frameworks hierarchy and formalised authority have always been seen as crucial problems – unlike many socialist movements which prioritise only class relations. Thus anarchist frameworks have been able to treat various

types of subordination (for example sexual and racial as well as economic) as more or less interdependent relationships each of which would need to be addressed by truly revolutionary movements. As early as 1872 the first Anarcho-Syndicalist conference (after the split at the 1st International) set the overcoming of women's subordination as one of the goals of the anarcho-syndicalist movement. Despite this at the theoretical level, the issue of women's oppression had never been given a high priority in the Spanish anarchist movement. Many anarchists refused to recognise the specific nature of women's oppression and those that did recognised that women's emancipation would follow either from a) their incorporation into the paid labour force or b) simply the establishment of an anarchist society.

The anarchist movement in Spain insisted that social and economic revolution should not be postponed until the war was won. Yet women anarchists were made aware that their liberation had to await the end of the war. While the authority of the capitalist over the worker, and the landlord over the tenant, could be challenged, that of man over woman could not be attacked until military victory was assured.

But the women in Mujeres Libres insisted on more conscious and direct action being necessary. While women or 'compañeras' were very involved at many different levels

prior to the revolution they felt that most anarchist men while talking a good line did not actually change their behaviour towards women on a day to day basis. For Mujeres Libres, as for anarchists in general, changing people's consciousness of themselves and their place in society was a crucial step towards revolutionary change. They insisted that the means must be consistent with the ends – therefore as the goal of revolutionary struggles is a non-hierarchical egalitarian society it must be created through the activities of a non-hierarchical movement. Thus Mujeres Libres was a federal, decentralised organisation. It had 147 local groups clustered in areas that were also major centres of the Anarcho-Syndicalist movement – especially in Madrid, Catalonia, the Levant and Aragon.

Spain before the War

Up to the 1930s Spanish society was dominated by the churches and was extremely sex divided. Most women and men had to keep almost exclusively to the company of their own sex. Also, the subordination of women, both economically and culturally, was much more severe than that of men. For example, rates of illiteracy were much higher for women and women who did work outside the home (predominantly unmarried women) had the lowest paid work and the worst conditions.

But also during the early 30s neighbour + hood cultural centres called 'ateneos' had been set up by the anarcho-syndicalist trade union movement (CNT) in many areas but especially in Barcelona. These played an important role in educating and preparing members for revolutionary change. They were particularly important for women in so far as they attacked illiteracy and helped build self-confidence. So while these went some way towards meeting the needs of women and unorganised workers in ways the union itself could not do, many women recognised the limitations of the ateneos. On the one hand they felt they were not treated with the same respect and seriousness as they should be. On the other hand they were aware of the inability of the CNT to attract many women since less women had had less 'preparation' prior to the civil war period.

Free Women

In late 1933 in Madrid a number of women in the anarcho-syndicalist movement sent letters to women throughout the country – both within the CNT and outside – saying they wanted to set up a women's organisation and asking what issues women felt needed to be addressed. There was an immediate and large response from women. Meanwhile in Barcelona women in the CNT were becoming very concerned that

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Mujeres Libres worked closely with the CNT Unions to address the problems of women doing the poorest paid work under the most oppressive conditions. They also fought to equalise wages between women and men. In some places this worked though in many a differential still existed. It is reckoned that in the collectives that were established at the outset of the revolution, in about only 50% of them were wages equalised. In cities Mujeres Libres groups grew up in many factories - often groups of Mujeres Libres women would visit up to 40 factories in a day and hold impromptu meetings with the women workers. In rural areas Mujeres Libres sponsored agricultural training programmes teaching skills from first aid to advanced practices of stock breeding. They believed that the skills they taught would provide women with the means for their own social liberation which would, in turn, help win the war. Mujeres Libres advocated and supported child care facilities in the neighbourhood and in the workplace to make it possible for women to work outside the home. In Barcelona they had a 'flying column' of child minders in the early days to help ensure women could attend their classes and union meetings etc.!

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CULTURAL SUBORDINATION

Despite a lot of analysis and work done about women in the paid labour force the women in Mujeres Libres paid little attention to the sexual divisions of labour itself or the stereotyping of women and men into certain types of labour. Generally, they had no clear position on the whole question of the cultural subordination of women. Some felt strongly about the dominance of 'bourgeois' morality - especially the notions of marriage and monogamy - seeing these as limiting everyone's potential for relationships. Though all argued against the notions of women solely as mothers and child minders, a lot of women still got married. Though with the advent of the revolution, many women and men, once married (in their local CNT office) publicly tore up their marriage certificates.

Mujeres Libres took a strong position on the question of prostitution and the governments policy towards its existence and control. They ran training courses for women who wanted to find an alternative income and had plans (not put into practice because of the demands of the war) to create centres for prostitutes to be supported while they 'retrained for better lives'.

Mercedes Comaposada, editor of the paper

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Women Propaganda Group on the streets of Barcelona, 1936.



Women queuing to vote during the elections in 1936

'Mujeres Libres', argued that one of the tasks of the revolution was to change men and women, and that it was impossible for men to transform their lives while they kept a portion of people in prostitution. 'As long as any woman is kept as an object and is prevented from developing her personality, prostitution, in fact, continues to exist'. Such was the success of Mujeres Libres in raising awareness among prostitutes that many of them began to organise in various ways. In one brothel, the women turned out their patrons and occupied their working premises, formed a union branch and affiliated to the CNT. They removed a picture of the sacred heart from the wall and in its place hung a sign, 'You are requested to treat the women as comrades. By order of the committee'

HEALTH

Another important focus for M.L. was health care. Up to the time of the Civil War what health care existed was provided and controlled by the church. After 1936, abortion was legalised by the Popular Front government - due mainly to the work of Federica Montseny, an anarchist who became Minister of Health and Social Services once the anarchists participated in the Popular Front government. M.L. held classes for women on health care and many related issues. Dissemination of information on birth control was a major task for them. Through their paper and these classes they began to help many women to overcome ignorance about their bodies and sexuality. In a country such as Spain where the church was very powerful work in this area was vital and some immediate effects were

seen - Orwell in his book, *Homage to Catalonia*, describes the streets of Barcelona being full of women. Prior to the revolution, women had to be chaperoned on the streets!

CONCLUSION

Mujeres Libres was quite a unique movement. Unlike other women's organisations in Spain at the time, both left and right, M.L. was an autonomous women's organisation. And unlike others, it was concerned with the personal, ethical and economic emancipation of Spanish women as well as their wartime services. Everything in the M.L. did had a 'consciousness raising' element to it. Unfortunately they had little time to see the effects of many of their programmes - the pressures of the war and the subsequent defeat by Franco saw to that. Little has been written about M.L. and, like many endeavours of women, their existence has been all but forgotten. Even when we speak of the history of feminism and of women's rights movements we tend to think only of the suffrage movement of the early part of the century and the women's liberation movements of the 1970s. Yet between these two periods was an autonomous organisation of women, 27,000 strong, which is unparalleled in revolutionary movements.

SOURCES:-

'Spanish Anarchism and Women's Liberation', T.E. Kaplan.

'Ideas and Action' magazine, Spring '86. ■

"SUPERGRASSES" ONE STEP FORWARD, ONE BACK!

Two appeals in the 'supergrass' system were heard in the month of July. The uncorroborated evidence of Black was dismissed, while that of McGrady upheld. As more people await trial under Whoriskey, and others await their appeal under Kirkpatrick and Gilmour, the argument that the 'supergrass' system acts as a continuation of internment gathers strength.

'SUPERGRASSES' AS INTERNMENT

Five of the 21 defendants, whose appeals were successful in the Black case, had spent almost 5 years each in prison. That is equivalent of a 10 year sentence. Several of them had already completed their 'sentences'.

While not as many people have been put through the 'supergrass' system, as were imprisoned during the internment period of '71 - '75, the success of this system lies in the duration of its existence, almost five years, and in the lack of public outrage and organised opposition which characterised internment.

BLACK APPEAL

At the end of the Black trial in August '83 22 people were given prison sentences ranging up to life imprisonment, by Justice Basil Kelly, a former unionist MP and Stormont Attorney General. Kelly described Black as 'one of the best witnesses I have ever heard', even before he had heard defence submissions, and proceeded to convict without any corroboration evidence.

The appeal judges, headed by Lord Chief Justice Lowry, said that Kelly had 'very much overrated the honesty' of Black, and that there were too many inconsistencies in the 'supergrass's' evidence. However it was with reluctance that Lowry released the defendants. He said it was 'probable

that Black was telling accurately what had been done and by whom it was done'.

If these releases suggest that 'justice' will eventually be done, even if it is only at the appeal stage, then a look at the McGrady appeal will dispell any illusions.

McGRADY APPEAL

The trial judge in this case was none other than Lord Lowry. Within the trial in Oct. '83, the balancing act was to release some of the defendants, because McGrady's evidence was 'contradictory, bizarre, and incredible', yet sentenced others on exactly the same evidence!

When the appeal of four of those sentenced came up on July 4th, further balancing was performed. Two people were released, and the other two had their sentences confirmed.

Interestingly one of the three appeal judges dissented, and recommended release for all four appellants.

REFINEMENT

The success of the Black appeal was a great boost to the families and friends in Ardoyne and elsewhere, who fought the system. But as the McGrady case shows, it is not an end to it.

Political and judicial expediency has meant some people going down, and others released after long periods behind bars.

There is no pattern either about the influence of the Anglo-Irish Accord. The balancing act, such as the earlier McGrady case and the releases under Quigley, Morgan and Grimley, was in operation before the Accord.

The only consistent characteristic so far, is that no loyalist stands convicted on the uncorroborated work of a 'supergrass'. ■

"Under The Health Surface"

VIDEO REVIEW

The most significant aspects of this programme on women's health are that it is for the most part, told by the women who suffer from bad health themselves; and unlike most other programmes on this issue it does not place the cycle of ill-health in a context of a personal problem but rather looks at the class nature of it. Most of the ill health and associated specific illnesses such as heart disease, hepatitis, bronchitis, gastroenteritis, spina bifida, etc. are preventable. They are directly related to unemployment, poverty, bad housing and compounded by unionist discrimination.

Bad housing is a major problem in Belfast. By the 1960s 1/3 of the stock in the public sector had been built before 1850, and 87% of all houses were in need of repair. To go some way towards remedying this, huge housing complexes were built using inferior materials and often not complying to general standards. Places such as Moyard and Divis were the results.

Women from Moyard in West Belfast talk about the maisonettes, which were built as a dumping ground for single parents. They talk about the damp and cold in the complex leading to at least one death – a young boy died from an uncommon type of polio caused by extreme damp and cold. 75% of all hepatitis in Belfast came from the Moyard area, as well as in 1982 the first case of polio in Ireland or the U.K. The problems of rats and vermin (besides the Brits and UDR) have led to many pressures apart from the obvious physical ones. Women speak about being afraid to let their children out to play and having to keep them cramped up in the maisonettes all day. As one woman put it, it's 'like a prison'.

They conducted health surveys in the area and widely publicised the results - one of which was the fact that the water lying

CHANNEL 4, 22nd June '86.

about in pools around the area was 90% raw sewage.

Divis suffers many of the same problems. Women here spoke of children constantly getting colds and other 'minor' illnesses. Many people get weekly prescriptions for nerves, and sleeping tablets to help deal with problems such as stress, tension, and depression, in overcrowded areas. Women are especially prone to these as they tend to spend more time cooped up at home with the kids.

Most estates are poorly served by shops and many people are living on state benefits. The north has the highest rate of spina bifida in the world and though this disease has been shown to be related to poor diet many people cannot afford to eat the food that is necessary for good health. This point was made by some of the Moyard women who talked about fruit being a luxury – especially with children, who would gobble it up in minutes!

Watching this programme and listening to women speak of their experiences rekindles the anger that we all feel from time to time. That anger has become an energy for the women in the programme. They have formed self-help groups dealing with drug dependence and depression. They have got the Moyard maisonettes demolished and some of the Divis blocks are being pulled down. Their sense of strength is powerful.

This is a well made and beautifully shot programme, produced by a woman who lives in Belfast. It is available for hire from Just Books, 7 Winetavern St., Belfast, or to purchase from Northern Visions, 9, Winetavern St., Belfast. We hope it will be shown by community groups and women's health groups, as it deserves a wide audience. ■